



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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REPORT CHRONICLES 200 YEARS OF WETLANDS LOSS

A report to Congress recently released by the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that 117 million wetland acres have been lost since colonial times in the lower 48 states.

Based on historical agricultural and soil records, the publication "Wetlands Losses in the United States--1780's to 1980's" outlines wetlands losses during the past two centuries and compares current wetland acreage to that of the 1780's. Readers of the wetlands loss report are advised that data on historic and existing wetlands, while based on the best available information, are estimates.

Among the report's findings are figures indicating 53 percent of the wetlands in the contiguous United States have been destroyed. Of the more than 220 million acres estimated to exist in colonial times, only 104 million remain in the Lower 48.

According to the report, 22 of the 50 states have lost at least half of their wetlands, mostly due to conversion to agriculture. Highlights of the report include:

- o More than 60 acres of wetlands have been lost every hour for the past 200 years in the contiguous United States.
- o Ten states have lost more than 70 percent of their original wetlands. They are Arkansas, California, Connecticut,

(over)

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, and Ohio.

- o California has lost the highest percentage of its wetlands (91 percent), while Alaska has lost the lowest (a fraction of 1 percent).
- o Roughly one-third of the Nation's total wetlands loss has taken place in the midwestern farm states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- o Except for Alaska, Hawaii, and New Hampshire, no state has lost less than 20 percent of its historical wetlands.

"Our challenge is clear," said Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner. "The Fish and Wildlife Service, through its own wetlands conservation programs and partnerships with states and other agencies, has made protecting and restoring wetlands its highest priority. Wetlands are by no means extinct, and working together, we can usher in a new era in wetlands conservation."

Copies of the report will be available in the near future from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Publications Unit, 1849 C Street NW., Mailstop 130 ARLSQ, Washington, DC 20240.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Attached are two tables that reflect information contained in the report.

WETLAND LOSSES 1780'S TO 1980'S EXPRESSED BY
ACREAGE AND PERCENT OF SURFACE AREA BY STATE

STATE	ESTIMATES OF EXISTING WETLANDS 1780's	WETLANDS 1980's	WETLANDS LOST 1780's TO 1980's	% OF WETLANDS LOST
ALABAMA	7,567,600	3,783,800	-3783800	-50%
ALASKA	170,200,000	170,000,000	-200000	-0.1%
ARIZONA	931,000	600,000	-331000	-36%
ARKANSAS	9,848,600	2,763,600	-7085000	-72%
CALIFORNIA	5,000,000	454,000	-4546000	-91%
COLORADO	2,000,000	1,000,000	-1000000	-50%
CONNECTICUT	670,000	172,500	-497500	-74%
DELAWARE	479,785	223,000	-256785	-54%
FLORIDA	20,325,013	11,038,300	-9286713	-46%
GEORGIA	6,843,200	5,298,200	-1545000	-23%
HAWAII	58,800	51,800	-7000	-12%
IDAHO	877,000	385,700	-491300	-56%
ILLINOIS	8,212,000	1,254,500	-6957500	-85%
INDIANA	5,600,000	750,633	-4849367	-87%
IOWA	4,000,000	421,900	-3578100	-89%
KANSAS	841,000	435,400	-405600	-48%
KENTUCKY	1,566,000	300,000	-1266000	-81%
LOUISIANA	16,194,500	8,784,200	-7410300	-46%
MAINE	6,460,000	5,199,200	-1260800	-20%
MARYLAND	1,650,000	440,000	-1210000	-73%
MASSACHUSETTS	818,000	588,486	-229514	-28%
MICHIGAN	11,200,000	5,583,400	-5616600	-50%
MINNESOTA	15,070,000	8,700,000	-6370000	-42%
MISSISSIPPI	9,872,000	4,067,000	-5805000	-59%
MISSOURI	4,844,000	643,000	-4201000	-87%
MONTANA	1,147,000	840,300	-306700	-27%
NEBRASKA	2,910,500	1,905,500	-1005000	-35%
NEVADA	487,350	236,350	-251000	-52%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	220,000	200,000	-20000	-9%
NEW JERSEY	1,500,000	915,960	-584040	-39%
NEW MEXICO	720,000	481,900	-238100	-33%
NEW YORK	2,562,000	1,025,000	-1537000	-60%
NORTH CAROLINA	11,089,500	5,689,500	-5400000	-49%
NORTH DAKOTA	4,927,500	2,490,000	-2437500	-49%
OHIO	5,000,000	482,800	-4517200	-90%
OKLAHOMA	2,842,600	949,700	-1892900	-67%
OREGON	2,262,000	1,393,900	-868100	-38%
PENNSYLVANIA	1,127,000	499,014	-627986	-56%
RHODE ISLAND	102,690	65,154	-37536	-37%
SOUTH CAROLINA	6,414,000	4,659,000	-1755000	-27%
SOUTH DAKOTA	2,735,100	1,780,000	-955100	-35%
TENNESSEE	1,937,000	787,000	-1150000	-59%
TEXAS	15,999,700	7,612,412	-8387288	-52%
UTAH	802,000	558,000	-244000	-30%
VERMONT	341,000	220,000	-121000	-35%
VIRGINIA	1,849,000	1,074,613	-774387	-42%
WASHINGTON	1,350,000	938,000	-412000	-31%
WEST VIRGINIA	134,000	102,000	-32000	-24%
WISCONSIN	9,800,000	5,331,392	-4468608	-46%
WYOMING	2,000,000	1,250,000	-750000	-38%

WETLAND LOSSES 1780'S TO 1980'S RANKED
BY PERCENT LOST (HIGHEST TO LOWEST)

STATE	% OF WETLANDS LOST
CALIFORNIA	-91%
OHIO	-90%
IOWA	-89%
MISSOURI	-87%
INDIANA	-87%
ILLINOIS	-85%
KENTUCKY	-81%
CONNECTICUT	-74%
MARYLAND	-73%
ARKANSAS	-72%
OKLAHOMA	-67%
NEW YORK	-60%
MISSISSIPPI	-59%
TENNESSEE	-59%
PENNSYLVANIA	-56%
IDAHO	-56%
DELAWARE	-54%
NEVADA	-52%
TEXAS	-52%
ALABAMA	-50%
COLORADO	-50%
MICHIGAN	-50%
NORTH CAROLINA	-49%
NORTH DAKOTA	-49%
KANSAS	-48%
FLORIDA	-46%
LOUISIANA	-46%
WISCONSIN	-46%
MINNESOTA	-42%
VIRGINIA	-42%
NEW JERSEY	-39%
WYOMING	-38%
OREGON	-38%
RHODE ISLAND	-37%
ARIZONA	-36%
SOUTH DAKOTA	-35%
VERMONT	-35%
NEBRASKA	-35%
NEW MEXICO	-33%
WASHINGTON	-31%
UTAH	-30%
MASSACHUSETTS	-28%
MONTANA	-27%
SOUTH CAROLINA	-27%
WEST VIRGINIA	-24%
GEORGIA	-23%
MAINE	-20%
HAWAII	-12%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	-9%
ALASKA	-0.1%